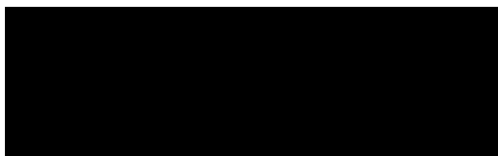


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U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services  
Administrative Appeals Office (AAO)  
20 Massachusetts Ave., N.W., MS 2090  
Washington, DC 20529-2090



**U.S. Citizenship  
and Immigration  
Services**



B5

DATE: **AUG 23 2012**

OFFICE: TEXAS SERVICE CENTER

FILE:

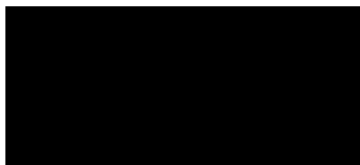


IN RE:      Petitioner:  
              Beneficiary:



PETITION:      Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker as a Member of the Professions Holding an Advanced Degree or an Alien of Exceptional Ability pursuant to section 203(b)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(2)

ON BEHALF OF PETITIONER:



**INSTRUCTIONS:**

Enclosed please find the decision of the Administrative Appeals Office in your case. All of the documents related to this matter have been returned to the office that originally decided your case. Please be advised that any further inquiry that you might have concerning your case must be made to that office.

Thank you,

Perry Rhew  
Chief, Administrative Appeals Office

**DISCUSSION:** The employment-based immigrant visa petition was denied by the Director, Texas Service Center (Director). It is now on appeal before the Chief, Administrative Appeals Office (AAO). The Director's decision will be withdrawn and the petition remanded for a new decision.

The petitioner is an engineering services company. It seeks to permanently employ the beneficiary in the United States as a senior piping engineer, and to classify him as an advanced degree professional pursuant to section 203(b)(2) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (the Act), 8 U.S.C. § 1153(b)(2).

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(k)(2) defines "advanced degree" as follows:

*Advanced degree* means any United States academic or professional degree or a foreign equivalent degree above that of baccalaureate. A United States baccalaureate degree or a foreign equivalent degree followed by at least five years of progressive experience in the specialty shall be considered the equivalent of a master's degree. If a doctoral degree is customarily required by the specialty, the alien must have a United States doctorate or a foreign equivalent degree.

The regulation at 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(k)(4) also provides, in pertinent part, as follows:

(i) *General.* Every petition under this classification must be accompanied by an individual labor certification from the Department of Labor . . . . The job offer portion of the individual labor certification . . . must demonstrate that the job requires a professional holding an advanced degree or the equivalent . . . .

The Form I-140, Immigrant Petition for Alien Worker, was filed on September 25, 2008. The petition was accompanied by an ETA Form 9089, Application for Permanent Employment Certification, that was certified by the Department of Labor (DOL).<sup>1</sup>

In a decision dated May 12, 2009, the Director denied the petition on the ground that the labor certification (ETA Form 9089) does not specify that the proffered position requires an individual holding an advanced degree or the equivalent of an advanced degree. The Director concluded that the marketing position does not qualify for classification as an advanced degree professional.

On June 3, 2009, the petitioner filed an appeal, Form I-290B, accompanied by a letter from counsel, asserting that the Director misread the job requirements on the labor certification. Counsel contends that the petitioner did specify in Part H of the ETA Form 9089 that the proffered position requires an advanced degree as defined in 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(k)(4) – in particular, a bachelor's degree and five years of progressive experience in an alternate occupation. Since the beneficiary meets these requirements, counsel asserts, the Director's decision should be withdrawn and the petition readjudicated.

The appeal is properly filed and timely. The AAO conducts appellate review on a *de novo* basis. *See Soltane v. DOJ*, 381 F.3d 143, 145 (3d Cir. 2004).

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<sup>1</sup> The ETA Form 9089 was filed with the DOL on April 21, 2008, and certified by the DOL on June 26, 2008.

The job requirements for the proffered position in this case are specified by the petitioner in Part H of the ETA Form 9089. This section of the labor certification application – Job Opportunity Information – describes the terms and conditions of the job offered. It is important that the ETA Form 9089 be read as a whole.

The job title of the proffered position is identified in Part H, Box 3, as senior piping engineer. In Boxes 4 and 4-B the minimum educational requirement is specified as a bachelor's degree in mechanical engineering. In Box 9 the petitioner stated that a foreign educational equivalent is also acceptable. In Boxes 5 and 6 the petitioner indicated that no training or experience in the "job offered" is required. In Boxes 10 and 10-B, however, the petitioner indicated that 60 months (five years) of experience in an alternate occupation – in particular, "developing piping design systems for the oil, gas & petrochemical industry" – is acceptable. In Box 14 the foregoing job requirements are consolidated in the following language:

Any suitable combination of education, experience or training is acceptable. Experience must be progressively responsible. Minimum requirements are Bachelor's degree or foreign equivalent in Mechanical Engineering with five years experience in developing piping design systems for the oil, gas & petrochemical industry.

In his denial decision the Director focused on the petitioner's entries in Boxes 6 and 14, and ignored the petitioner's entry in Box 10. Since the labor certification did not require any "experience in the job offered" to go along with the requisite bachelor's degree, and stated that "any suitable combination of education, experience or training is acceptable," the Director concluded that the proffered position did not require both a bachelor's degree and five years of progressive experience in the specialty. In the Director's view, therefore, the position could not be classified as an advanced degree professional.

The AAO does not agree with the Director's interpretation of the labor certification. Rather, the AAO agrees with counsel's contention that the entries in Boxes 4 and 10 of Part H make clear that both a bachelor's degree and five years of experience in an alternate occupation are required to qualify for the proffered position. Box 10 is read in combination with Boxes 4, 5, and 6, and is not a stand-alone job requirement. While Box 14 does say that "any suitable combination of education, experience or training is acceptable," that seemingly open-ended language is modified by the language that immediately follows: **"Minimum requirements are Bachelor's degree or foreign equivalent in Mechanical Engineering with five years experience developing piping design systems for the oil, gas & petrochemical industry."** (Emphasis added). Since the educational and experience components of the labor certification, in combination, constitute an advanced degree within the definition of 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(k)(4), the proffered position qualifies for classification as an advanced degree professional under section 203(b)(2) of the Act.

Thus, the petitioner has overcome the ground for denial in the Director's decision. Accordingly, the Director's decision will be withdrawn.

To be eligible for approval as an advanced degree professional, the beneficiary must have all the education, training, and experience specified on the labor certification as of the petition's priority date. See *Matter of Wing's Tea House*, 16 I&N 158 (Act. Reg. Comm. 1977). The petitioner must also

establish its continuing ability to pay the proffered wage from the priority date onward. See 8 C.F.R. § 204.5(d). The priority date is the date the labor certification application was accepted for processing by the DOL. *Id.*<sup>2</sup> The priority date in this case is April 21, 2008. The “offered wage” of the subject position, as stated in Box G of the ETA Form 9089, is \$94,890 per year.

The Director made no findings in his decision as to whether the beneficiary satisfied the education and experience requirements of the labor certification,<sup>3</sup> and whether the petitioner has established its continuing ability to pay the proffered wage.

Therefore, the petition will be remanded to the Director for the consideration of these issues, and any other issue the Director deems appropriate. The Director may request additional evidence from the petitioner, if needed, and the petitioner may submit additional evidence within a reasonable time period to be set by the Director. The Director will then issue a new decision.

As always in visa petition proceedings, the burden of proof rests entirely with the petitioner. See section 291 of the Act, 8 U.S.C. § 1361.

**ORDER:** The Director’s decision of May 12, 2009, is withdrawn. The petition is remanded to the Director for the issuance of a new decision.

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<sup>2</sup> If the petition is approved, the priority date is also used in conjunction with the Visa Bulletin issued by the Department of State to determine when a beneficiary can apply for adjustment of status or for an immigrant visa abroad.

<sup>3</sup> The AAO notes that the Electronic Database for Global Education (EDGE), created by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO), includes an entry for *Titulo de Ingeniero*, the degree earned by the beneficiary in Venezuela (specifically, *Titulo de Ingeniero Mecanico*), describing it as a professional degree that is comparable to a bachelor’s degree in the United States.